

Pro Bono Opportunities



Every day, Children's Law Center receives requests for pro bono attorneys to represent some of DC's most vulnerable children and families. Pro bono attorneys working with Children's Law Center serve more than 400 children every year. These attorneys help children in the District achieve the solid foundation of family, health, and education that they need to succeed. We currently refer three types of cases to pro bono attorneys:

custody guardian ad litem

Pro bono attorneys represent the best interests of children in complex custody cases. DC Superior Court judges refer these cases directly to Children's Law Center when they identify the need for a guardian ad litem to represent the child's best interests.

caregiver representation

Pro bono attorneys represent caregivers seeking to provide children with permanent homes through adoption, guardianship, or custody. These caregivers include foster parents, grandparents, and other relatives who want to provide loving homes and stability for children who are in the child welfare system or at risk of entering foster care.

special education

Pro bono attorneys represent parents of children with special education needs where they are not being addressed in the child's current educational environment. These cases may involve obtaining evaluations, advocating for special education services, or challenging the denial of services at a due process hearing.

Cases are referred to us from a variety of sources, including judges; guardians ad litem to children in the abuse and neglect system; social workers; other legal services organizations; and prospective clients calling into our Helpline, which is staffed full-time with experienced intake attorneys. Children's Law Center conducts extensive screening before we refer cases to pro bono attorneys. Many of our pro bono cases are well-suited to both litigators and non-litigators, and negotiation skills are particularly relevant.

training and mentoring

Children's Law Center regularly conducts half-day trainings in all of our pro bono case areas, and attorneys should attend a relevant training before taking a pro bono case. Our pro bono attorneys receive an extensive reference manual and access to online training materials, including training videos. Our experienced practitioners also serve as mentors for pro bono attorneys. These lawyers bring decades of experience in family and special education law. We do not co-counsel with or supervise pro bono attorneys, but we are available to discuss strategy, legal issues, and local family court practice. We can also help attorneys identify model pleadings.



taking a case

We distribute a pro bono opportunities case list via e-mail approximately twice a month. Cases are placed with qualified pro bono attorneys on a first-come, first-served basis. Attorneys must be admitted to practice in the District of Columbia or, if their application is pending, be eligible to practice under Rule 49(c) of the Rules of the DC Court of Appeals.

By becoming a pro bono lawyer, you can help a child in our community have a solid foundation of family, health, and education. If you are interested in learning more about our pro bono program, joining our e-mail list, or taking a case, contact Pro Bono Director Nancy Drane at 202-467-4900 ext. 502 or ndrane@childrenslawcenter.org or Pro Bono and Intake Assistant Gillian Schaps at 202-467-4900 ext. 586 or gschaps@childrenslawcenter.org.

Visit www.childrenslawcenter.org to learn more.